In the claims: The claims are as follows.

1. (Previously presented) A method by which a multimedia message is transcoded *en route* from a sending terminal via a messaging server to a receiving terminal, the method comprising:

a user agent of the sending terminal inserting, into the message, media characteristics of the message sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal; and

the messaging server reading the media characteristics and deciding whether the message should be transcoded based only on the inserted media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

2. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server sends the message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server uses the inserted media characteristics to itself decide if transcoding is needed.

3. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server sends the message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server uses the inserted media characteristics to itself decide which parts of the message need transcoding.

4. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server determines, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the message need transcoding and sends the message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed

for any message part, and includes in the message an indication of which parts of the message need transcoding.

5. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server determines, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the message need transcoding and sends only those message parts requiring transcoding to a transcoding server.

6. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the transcoding is performed based on the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, without performing an analysis of the message to determine whether transcoding is needed.

7. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 6, wherein the transcoding is performed without also performing even an analysis to determine which parts of the message need to be transcoded.

8. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the user agent inserts the media characteristics into a field in the header of the message.

9. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the user agent inserts the media characteristics into a header field in the body of the message.

10. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the media characteristics include image and video resolution, or number of frames and frame rate of visual content, or sampling rate of audio content.

11. (Previously presented) A sending terminal, comprising a processor configured to:

determine media characteristics of a message sufficient in detail to enable a messaging terminal to determine whether the message should be transcoded based only on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal and the inserted media characteristics; and

insert the media characteristics into the message.

12. (Previously presented) A messaging server, comprising a processor configured to:

obtain media characteristics inserted into a message intended for a receiving terminal; and

decide whether the message should be transcoded based only on comparing the media characteristics with actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

13. (Previously presented) A system, comprising a sending terminal and a messaging server, wherein:

the sending terminal is configured to insert, into a message for a receiving terminal, media characteristics of the message sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal; and

the messaging server is configured to read the media characteristics and decide whether the message should be transcoded based only on the media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

14. (Previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the

messaging server is further configured to transcode the message based on the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, without performing an analysis of the message to determine media characteristics of the message relevant to deciding whether transcoding is needed.

15. (Previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to send the message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server is configured to use the inserted media characteristics to itself decide if transcoding is needed.

16. (Previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to send the message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server is configured to use the inserted media characteristics to itself decide which parts of the message need transcoding.

17. (Previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to determine, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the message need transcoding and to send the message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed for any message part, and to include in the message an indication of which parts of the message need transcoding.

18. (Previously presented) A system as in claim 13, further comprising a transcoding engine for transcoding the message, wherein the transcoding is performed based on the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, without performing an analysis of the

message to determine whether transcoding is needed.

19. (Previously presented) A computer program product comprising: a computer readable storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a sending terminal, wherein said computer program code includes instructions for performing the method of claim 21.

20. (Previously presented) A computer program product comprising: a computer readable storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a messaging server, wherein said computer program code includes instructions for performing the method of claim 24.

21. (Previously presented) A method for use by a sending terminal comprising:

determining media characteristics for media components of a message intended for a receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics are sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal; and

inserting the media characteristics into the message.

22. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are inserted into a field in the header of the message.

23. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 21, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are inserted into a header field in the body of the message.

24. (Previously presented) A method for use by a messaging server comprising:

obtaining media characteristics inserted into a message intended for a receiving terminal; and

deciding whether the message should be transcoded based only on the inserted media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

25. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are obtained from a field in the header of the message.

26. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are obtained from a header field in the body of the message.

27. (Previously presented) An apparatus for transmitting a message, the apparatus comprising a processor configured to:

determine media characteristics for a media component of the message; and

provide the media characteristics in the message.

28. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a field in the header of the message.

29. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media

characteristics are provided in a header field in the body of the message.

30. (Previously presented) A method for transmitting a message, the method comprising:

determining media characteristics for a media component of the message; and

providing the media characteristics in the message.

31. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 30, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a field in the header of the message.

32. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 30, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a header field in the body of the message.

33. (Previously presented) An apparatus for processing a message, the apparatus comprising a processor configured to:

receive media characteristics of a media component of the message in a field of the message; and

determine whether the message should be transcoded based at least in part on the received media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.

34. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a field in the header of the

message.

35. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a header field in the body of the message.

36. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine media components of the message which need transcoding based at least on the respective received media characteristics; and

transmit at least a part of the message to a transcoding server.

37. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

transcode a media component of the message based at least on the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

38. (Previously presented) A method for processing a message, the method comprising:

receiving media characteristics of a media component of the message in a field of the message; and

determining whether the message should be transcoded based at least in part on the received media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.

39. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 38, wherein the

message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are received in a field in the header of the message.

40. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 38, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are received in a header field in the body of the message.

41. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:

determining which media components of the message need transcoding based at least on the respective received media characteristics; and

transmitting to a transcoding server at least the media components that need transcoding.

42. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:

transcoding a media component of the message based at least on the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

43. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein the media characteristics comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.

44. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the media characteristics comprise at least one of the

following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.

45. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 30, wherein the media characteristics comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.

46. (Previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the media characteristics comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.

47. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 38, wherein the media characteristics comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.